[Mrs. Glasson]

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SOUTH CAROLINA WRITERS' PROJECT

LIFE HISTORY

TITLE: MRS. GLASSON

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Name of Person Interviewed Mrs. Richard Glasson (white)

Place West Springs, S. C.

Address Pauline, Route #1

Occupation Retired housewife

Name of Writer Caldwell Sims, Union, S. C.

Name of Reviser E. F. Kennedy

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Mrs. Richard Gleason - her neighbors spoke of her always as “Old Miz Glasson” - died in April. After she became a widow she lived with her married daughter, Mrs. West. Last December a visitor found her rocking contentedly in a comfortable chair before an open fire of hickory logs, burning on substantial fire dogs made in the blacksmith shop in the

backyard. This shop belonged first to William West, for whom West Springs was named, long ago. An old spool bed in the room was made by him.

Mrs. Glasson wore a plain gray housedress, with a small white apron tied around her thin waist. A gray cotton bonnet covered her head. Her stick rested on the arm of her chair and a well worn Bible lay on the table beside her. A small radio shared the table. In spite of her 91 years Mrs. Glasson's complexion was still florid and her hair a reddish gray. Her keen eyes sparkled C10 - 1/31/41 - S.C. 2 when she talked of Mr. Glasson.

“Yes, he often spoke of London. His name was Richard Gleason, and he was born in Caldwell, England. Jes' how close it was to London, has done left my mind, it's been so long since he talked about it. Mr. Glasson was a quiet man who never talked about himself; I've known him to go all day without saying a dozen words. When he did talk, his voice was clear and deep, but he never did call words like we do, and he never fell into our way of talking as long as he lived.

“Mother was a Miss Cannon - her first name was Polly - of Spartanburg County. She knew Mr. Glasson long before I knew him. Mr. Glasson's first wife was a Cannon, my first cousin. He had two small children by her when I married him. Their grandmother, my aunt, took them when their mother died and raised them. Father and Mother, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Cannon, were born and raised near Cannon's Camp Ground. I was born there, and lived there until I married Mr. Glasson, and came to West Springs to live when he started working in the Opal gold mine here. Cannon's Camp Ground is in Spartanburg County where I always went to the camp meetings. They don't have them any more, but I reckon the settlement will always go by that name. My folks have always been Methodist, that's why I'm a Methodist. I was sprinkled as an infant at Cannon's Camp Ground, and I've been in the church ever since; but I never joined until last summer. I kept my religion all these years, but I wasn't taken into the church until Rev. N. K. Polk, received me into the Bogansville Methodist Church in the summer of 1938! I was converted when I was a very little girl though, at one of the meetings at Cannon's Camp Ground.

“Since I haven't been able to walk for over a year I don't go to church, but I listen to good sermons over my radio. It's a great blessin' to 3 me. I don't like fancy music on Sunday. I stick to my religion, and I listen to the big pipe organ concerts and the choirs. I've heard the organs in Spartanburg, and they are heap prettier and finer than the little reed organs folks used to use in their homes and in the churches around here. The old hymns seem even prettier when they're played on those powerful organs and sung by those big choirs. God surely must have inspired the man who made the first pipe organ. So you see religion changes and improves, too. Folks have gotten away from religion. They like the kind of music that comes over the radios Sundays, or the programs wouldn't play that sort. The entertainers have to please their public to sell the radios, and the change isn't good for the folks.

“My father was a school teacher. He trained us like he did his scholars to keep regular hours and to have a certain time to do certain things. That's how I brought my children up. They are not bringing up theirs like that though. I had four brothers and two sisters. Father was fond of the preachers who came through the country. He always entertained them at our house. They did not have homes, like they do now. Lots of them were single men. Now I believe all of the preachers marry young.

“Every summer, after lay-by, Camp Meetings started at Cannon's Camp Ground. That's where the name came from - the camping ground was on the Cannon's land, where the camp meetings went on for seventy-odd years. I remember those meetings from earliest recollections. Going to camp meeting was an annual event until after the Confederate War started. We went to the camping ground on Thursday and remained through Sunday, pullin' up and going home on Monday. All the land owners sent their wagons filled with plenty of provisions and cots, blankets, chairs, beds, and fodder, corn, oats, and wheat for beast and man.

Families set up their own camps. Some even built comfortable cabins and stables for the horses and mules. Strangers and their turn-outs were taken in and treated as guests. Relatives and friends from a long way off were invited to come and stay for the camp meeting. Sometimes the camp meeting lasted until harvest time. Spartanburg, Union, and York people came for it. Stands for the singers were built and from time to time the camp ground was enlarged. A place was reserved for the darkies who came to wait on the big crowd of white folks. Frying-size chickens were kept in large pens. Everything imaginable was fixed to eat. Ladies exchanged new recipes with each other. People talked about news at home and all over the state, and the whole country around the camp. Pretty often a whole congregation came from some church and brought their own pastor with them. Each family group held morning and evening prayers. Everybody at these meetings was good, neighborly and kind. The Spirit of the Lord was really abroad there.

“I know of one night just before the Confederate War broke out when eighteen preachers attended the Camp Meeting. That session lasted until midnight, there were so many to 'come through' and give their personal experiences. The singing was more beautiful and solemn than usual that night. Tunes of course, were raised with a tuning fork, or by an elder or a deacon with a deep bass voice. Lordy Mercy, you never heard the like of shouting in your life as I heard there that night when those eighteen preachers were on the platform! People had to stop shouting because they got exhausted. The darkies would fall down on the ground to shout out their good tidings of redemption and conversion. The mourners' bench, for lost sinners, was full every night. But on this particular night there wasn't room on the mourners' bench for the converts! Several hundred were converted. Special prayers were raised in the family group for some 5 friend or loved one who was about to 'come through', but not quite persuaded. Oh, but people really had religion in those days! You don't see anything like that anywhere nowadays.

“I had two second cousins, Lewis and Gabriel Cannon, brothers. Lewis married a woman who believed in rejoicing, instead of crying, when folks died. She belonged to the

Bogansville Methodist Church. More than once she put her gold and diamond rings in the collection plate, when Lewis would not put in as much money as she wanted him to. After the services, Lewis always sent up and redeemed his wife's jewelry. Once this lady went from Charleston to New York on the boat to a Methodist Convention in New York. Her daughter, Bright Alice Cannon, was in New York studying voice. People who knew her thought she was a sweet singer. One night her mother was missed on the boat , when she was returning to Bogansville. The crew never found her. She got up from her chair on deck and went to her state room. Her bed wasn't touched; the port hole was open; so the crew thought that she must have jumped into the ocean.

“Now you want/ me to tell you about Mr. Glasson, and what I'm going to tell you to start with, happened before I was born. He was a little boy way back in England when his mother, Blanche Comer, died. In a few years his father married again. Richard loved his mother so much that he ran away from his step-mother, and went to his uncle, Charlie Gleason, I reckon it was. His step-mother was good to him, but he couldn't bear the thoughts of another woman taking his mother's place in the house. He asked his uncle not to tell his father where he was. I don't know how long he stayed at Uncle Charlie's. Finally his aunt Fannie Stevens told Richard's father where he was. She'd put some money in the Falmouth Bank in England for Richard. Richard's father made him promise 6 to come back home. His uncle Charlie wanted him to stay with him, but his father wasn't willing. His uncle Charlie told Richard's father that if he'd let Richard stay he'd give him a fine horse to ride. But Richard's father would not consent for him to live on with his uncle. When Richard got home his little heart ached as much as it ever did for his mother. His step-mother gave him money to spend so he'd be happy. But he wasn't. He wanted to come to America. He asked his aunt Fannie to get his money out of the bank so he could come. After he sailed from England, he never received any more money out of the Falmouth Bank, and his people didn't send him any. My daughters have tried to trace this money. There's unclaimed money in the Falmouth Bank in England in the name of Gleason. I can't say how my husband's name got changed to Glasson, but it must have been on the vessel that

he came over on. We haven't got any written records of his voyage, or of his departure, and my children can't get that money out of the bank over there.

“My husband said the sail vessel he came to America on was tossed about on the Atlantic for eight weeks. When they were half-may across, the winds swept the ship back in sight of the English mainland! Many were the times they thought they were lost and would never see land again. The crew often had to bail water from the hull to keep the vessel from sinking. They were miserably cold, hungry, and often wet. They had to stand hardships of all kinds. I don't know the name of the ship; I didn't write down a thing he told me, as I should have done. Soon as the vessel landed, Mr. Glasson wrote his people. His letter made them happy; for they thought he had been lost at sea. He had to work so hard on that old ship coming across that he said he didn't enjoy sea life. I don't remember where they landed . , somewhere in this country.

7

“He had soft brown eyes, brown hair and beard and weighed about 170 pounds. He was over six feet tall. He died when he was 72 in 1912, and he's buried in the Bogansville graveyard, where I'll be put along-side of him.

“He did some work on the Seaboard Airline Railroad when it came across Goshen Hill to Carlisle from Whitmire. When I first took notice of him, he was a-selling maps. He got $30 a month and his expenses for that, so I have heard him say. He came to the old William West home, where I spent a lot of my girlhood. It was falling dusk and so uncle William asked him to rest for the night, for in those days peddlers were always coming around selling their wares. Folks kept them for the night when they happened at the house after sundown. That was the best way to get the news of the countryside in those days. Roads stayed muddy from October through April; traveling was hard; so folks generally stayed home until the hot sun dried the roads enough to make traveling easy. Mud holes stayed in the roads from season to season, and peddlers were about the only folks who traveled regular. The stage was out of date and not many people lived on the new railroad tracks

that had been built. Just a few people lived near the stations, but of course, they got news quickly from the trains. So country folks were glad to have travelers spend the night so they could talk to them. Everybody was honest and kind then, and nobody had much money. So teams were cared for and fed, and the mistress of the house fixed the best she had for her visitor, and there was no thought of charges. If the stranger did offer money when he left , it was taken as an insult , and that person wasn't asked to come again. When he did show manners he was asked to return and spend a spell under the roof.

8

“As usual, Richard jes' set around at my uncle's that night without much to say. Of course we were well acquainted as he had been in our family for a number of years, and he was now a widower. We went to bed early. I was disgusted. He left soon after breakfast was over. They teased me and said the reason he didn't talk none, was because he was eyein' me. I bristled and said I didn't like him a bit; everybody laughed. Two months passed before I saw him again, and he was still sellin' maps. This time I was at Aunt Sally Cannon's house on Zion Hill. He came up there to see me. Aunt Sally liked Richard, and she made me do a lot of fixin' up for him. From then on, he came to see me regular. I got to the place where I was fond of him. In less than a year we were married at Aunt Sally's house. She was mother's sister. A notary by the name of Holt that she and Richard liked married us in 1888.

“My dress was pretty, but it wasn't fine. Aunty Sally and I went to Spartanburg to buy it and we didn't get hoops with it, they cost too much. Some of the women at the wedding had muscadine vines run in pleats in their petticoats to hold out their dresses. Mr. Glasson had on a blue suit. He wore a moustache then but no beard , and his eyes sparkled the day we married. The weather was hard cold, and they used a sled to haul wood to the house for fires. Our wedding supper was a great spread. Aunt Sally had chickens and hames and everything to go with them. The table was covered with a heavy white linen cloth. After supper was over, we talked a while and then left for Grandpa James Cannon's where we stayed three days. Then we went to Clifton, where we lived a little while. We

came to West Springs to the mines, for Mr. Glasson had been brought up in the mines in Dover, England, where he worked as a boy for almost nothing a day. He told of also having worked in mines 9 in Pennsylvania and Kentucky, where he went down as far as 4,000 feet under the ground. He worked a short while in some silver mines, but I have forgotten which ones.

“We had five children - Charlie, William, Alice, Maude, and Wallace. Charlie was killed by a train in Spartanburg; William lives at Tucapau with his wife and six children; Alice grew up, but died young and is buried by her father; Maude there, married Johnny West; and Wallace is single and lives here with us. Johnny's father, Pack West, was the first owner of West Springs. Maude has a son, Ray, who lives here and works for the State Highway Department in Spartanburg.

“It was a lot easier for me to raise five then than now. The women here said that I had an easy time, and 'reckon I did. Their husbands depended on nothing but the farm for a living. Those that did work in the mines were green at it. Nobody knew how to sift ore but Mr. Glasson. He'd been doing it all his life. He knew how to grade and classify the ore, and he did for all who worked in the mines. As long as Mr. Glasson worked in the West Springs mines he never made less than $80 or a $100 a month. In those days it didn't take over $10 a month for the family to live on. Mr. Glasson was a good trader, and when he was not in the mines he was going over the country in his buggy selling things. On those trips he picked up things for me that he knew I needed or thought I'd like. He bought pretty rugs, fine laces, serviceable bed clothes, and vegetables for the house, and he bought the children toys, fruits, and all kind of candy, and things for them to play with. No other children anywhere around had such things except at Christmas or maybe on a birthday. On these trips he'd pick up chickens, eggs, turkeys, hogs, mutton and the like at bargains - low prices. All this was a great help in more ways than one. Our garden was good in season, and so was our corn patch and sweet and irish potatoe potato 10 patches, peanut and watermelon and canteloupe patches. We had chickens, but we didn't keep a cow. Mr. Glasson bought all of our milk and butter from a family living near the Thomson mine. We

fattened our hogs from my kitchen and from roastin' ears. Mr. Glasson got our dry goods in Spartanburg, and I made a lot of the clothes we wore. Before I was married I carded and spun regular, but haven't done a speck of it since. Big families are lots harder now, I see that watching my children. They have to face problems I never dreamed of. People live such complex lives now. Every day they have to dress fine. When I was young, folks had Sunday clothes and every-day ones. Now, from the cradle to the grave, they dress up every day. This fashion takes a lot more and it also costs. Today we ride in automobiles everywhere, and they tell me it costs twenty-five cents to run one a mile! In my day we never thought of riding a mile or so, but walked, unless the weather was bad; then we rode horseback. Why, then a lot of people who were well-to-do didn't even have conveyances! Now every little Tom, Dick, and Harry has an automobile. We walked to church in groups, to Sunday School and to the Missionary Society, when it was started, and to the quilting bees. These were the main amusements when I was young. At the quilting bees we spent the day, and the men folks were out husking corn or rolling logs.

“The corn was piled on a gallon jug of likker and all the men folks in the neighborhood came to the husking. I have in mind now a husking at Uncle Larkin Lancaster's house. He had all his friends in to shuck his corn. When the last ear was shucked the jug was passed around for all who wanted [?] to take a little nip. When, [at?] his wife's signal, Uncle Larkin invited all of them into the dining room to supper. This time she and the ladies who had been 11 quilting all day had cooked a big chicken stew. After supper three negro fiddlers came in and the young folks danced a little, with the older ones joining in when they felt like it.

“You ask me about log rollings? A log rolling was held when new ground was being cleared for a corn field, there wasn't any place to pile the cut trees. So the trunks and limbs were piled to dry so that they could be burnt in the very early spring. The owner of the new ground would invite his neighbors to help him with the cutting and piling and log rolling. They were rolled and piled in a clearing wide enough to deep keep the woods from catching on fire. I have seen a field of six or eight acres burning at one time. They day of

the burning, all the men folks who had been at the cutting came back to guard stray sparks that might set fire to the woodlands nearby. Sometimes the fire would last two or three days before it burned down. The men stayed there and cooked and roasted rabbits and birds and other meat over the coals, and they even had barbecues there. Once I went with Uncle Simp Cannon to a log rolling at Grandpa James Cannon's house. I road horseback on a side-saddle with a riding skirt. Some came in buggies, and there were one or two in carriages there. We stayed several days watching the fire, singing hymns in the open, and cooking and eating there. What a sight to see those logs burning and to hear them crackling and to watch the leaping flames which seemed to go up to the very sky itself. At night the glow of live coals covered several acres. One night it rained and put out all the fire. In three days the ashes were plowed under to make the soil light and loose.

“And now look how scarce wood is, and how much we have to pay to get enough cut to last through the winter. And these times you have to pay to get it hauled. In the good old log-rolling days all thexe these things were done 12 without spending money. This has made country folks get in the habit of burning black sooty coal. It's easy to get and folks in town have been useing using nothing but coal for a number of years. But I'll burn nothing but wood as long as I live. Look at those glowing coals and the hickory and oak ashes piled up in the fireplace. They'll do my garden soil so much good this spring. Tonight I'll cover that back log with ashes and in the morning it'll be a bed of live coals and all I'll have to do will be to throw on some kindling wood and the fire will be burning again. They tell me these CCC boys are planting trees to make new forests that'll keep land from washing and winds from sweeping over the cleared fields so strong. You see plenty of gullies now, but when I was young you didn't see a gully in Union County. I hope folks will learn how to stop up the gullies and keep them from coming and how to make the land soft and loamy like it used to be when the country was first settled. I'm old now, and I don't go out much; so I can't tell you much about the new ways of living, but in my day, I've lived well. My children are having a harder time than I did and it's a good thing they don't have big families, for if they did they couldn't get along well with them like I did.

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“When I was a girl, folks was more neighborly than they seem now. If you happened to get sick or to get a fall, or if there was a funeral, then everybody turned out to favor you. But ordinarilly folks don't stop in like they used to because cars are so fast and stopping takes up too much time. It takes something special to bring them. Christmas Eve of 1937 I was walking around in my yard when I suddenly fell and somehow broke my ankle. It was near Christmas again before I could get around on this old stick. I hadn't been laid up a week before half of West Springs, Coleraine, 13 and Bogansville Townships had been to see me and fetch me anythinf anything from a ball of yarn to a whole pound cake. Folks I'd never seen came because I had a broken ankle. I laid in bed and thought how much more I'd have enjoyed their company if they had come while I was well and spry and felt like talkin' a lot. But you got to dress up and go to a big ball game or to the show to see your friends nowadays. I know/ how to live, for I go to bed at eight and get up at five; then, after dinner, I lie down and rest and nap. You've got to stay still long enough to let your muscles rest and build up. Some of these younguns are jes' coming in from a frolic when I get up in the morning. When I went to frolics, I got home by midnight. You can't work all day and frolic all night and expect to be well. The younguns have to get down sick to get a good rest in bed! Quick ways of traveling have changed ways of living more than any other one thing, is my way of thinking. This rush makes people have nerves. I never had a thing like nerves in my life.

“I can beat my grandchildren spellin', and they have diplomas. I think my school was the best, but they laugh at me for saying so. I learned readin', writin', and arithmetic. I walked to school at sunup and stayed till an hour by sun. I kept my mind on my business at school, or got the teacher's hickory. Now the children leave home at eight o'clock in the busses, hurrying and making a lot of noise. Two o'clock sees them home, grabbing a bite to eat and out again. They don't have time to let their lessons settle in their heads, so they soon forget what the teacher's told them.

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“When I first came to West Springs, people from Charleston, Columbia, Newberry, and Union came in fine turnouts to drink this water. During the Confederate War people from the lower part of the state left their homes and came here hunting safety from the desperadoes known as Yankees. Our first 14 refugees were Charlestonians. They soon filled the hotel, Old Aunt “Patty” West, who owned land all around the spring, built cabins to rent the refugees. The West Springers liked the Charleston aristocrats and treated them with every kindness they could. The city folks returned the favors in ways never to be forgot. When they went back to their homes after the war was over, people saw them go with a feeling of regret. Soon after the war the watering places began to be less popular. Aunt 'Patty' tore her cabins down and had negro houses built out of the lumber. The year after that, we moved into a house next to Aunt 'Patty', down by the spring. About this time well-digging machines came to West Springs, and people had wells in their yards, and then they did not have to make long trips to the spring for water.

“Brother Virgil Green Cannon went to Columbia in 1864 to join 'The Boys of Sixteen.' During the war he worked in a sock factory in Columbia, and when it closed he came back to his home in Spartanburg County. He stopped with us for a month's rest and to drink the spring water. Mother had two brothers in the war, Uncle Barry and Uncle Thomas Cannon, who joined the army in Spartanburg. Lift the lid of this old trunk, and I'll show you some of my husband's Confederate money; but it'll never be any account again. See these ten and fifteen-cent pieces, that they used to call 'shin plasters.'

“When this money went out-of-date and the slaves were freed, living in the South got hard for the first time in its history. Things were a little hard for me, but I didn't have as hard a time as some. Mr. Glasson gave up his peddlin' and spent all his time in the Opal and Thomson mines. He worked hard to make all he could on the gold he dug. Mr. Ruff Hopkins had come here and bought all the gold the miners got and shipped it to Washington, D. C. He bought a many a bag from Mr. Glasson. We had money right along, and Richard 15 would still go to Spartanburg to buy the things we wanted. It was hard to

get things during Reconstruction. Those old carpetbaggers and scalawags were hanging out all around Spartanburg, so they told me, but I never went there a single time to see them. Men-folks did the going, and the women stayed at home where they were safe. Mr. Glasson got things for neighbors, for he'd been used to travelin' around the country and so he kept on going more than the other men folks around here did. After things got to running regular, my husband took me on the train from Glenn Springs to Spartanburg, one day. He had been on the train a lot, but it was my first time. I wore a bonnet tied under my chin and ir it had pasteboard slats to make it stand out. My dress was gray worsted.

“Mr. Glasson could be witty when the notion struck him. Mr. Tease came to be a foreman in the mines after the war. He and his wife were from Pennsylvania. One day Mrs. Tease came along driving her horse and buggy. She met Mr. Glasson walking home from the mine. She drew rein and said, 'Mr. Glasson, where are you going?' He told her, I'm on my way home, but I'm going by the Thomson mine.' She said, 'Well, Mr. Glasson, I wish you'd look at my horse and see if I have the harness on right.' Mrs. Tease's turnout was new and she had never hitched up one in her life before. Mr. Glasson had never hitched up a horse in his life, either. He just looked at the turnout for a long time and finally he said, 'Lady, I'm very much like you, but I do know that you have the right end of the horse in front!' They both went on their way laughing.

“I like company, you don't have to go. Is it dinner time? Well, you may as well stay and have a bite, we're having hog jowl, collards, and cracklin' bread today. T'ain't fine, but it's good eating. I like buttermilk with my cracklings, don't you? We had partridges for breakfast this morning.

“Come back and sit a long spell with me again, I like for folks to sit a long spell, seems like olden times . Good-bye ! ”